

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system of controlling the distribution of pills between a manufacturer and a consumer, said system comprising:
 - a machine-readable code on a surface of each of said pills, said code conveying information relating to one of lot number, date of manufacture, date of expiration, manufacturer, location of manufacturer, and National Drug Code number; and
 - a scanner adapted to read said machine-readable code of said at least one of said pills ~~so that information conveyed by said code may be interpreted; and~~ ^{A scanner arranged to scan} ~~means for scanning~~ said at least one of said pills during the distribution between said manufacturer and said consumer ~~so that said scanned pill may be identified according to said interpreted information, and its distribution thereby controlled.~~
2. A pill containing a drug and having a surface, said pill comprising:
 - a machine-readable code located on said surface, said code relating to one of drug information, manufacturing information, and contraindications of the drug.
3. ^A ~~The~~ pill according to claim 2, wherein said pill includes a transparent layer defining an outer surface and an inner surface, said code being located on said inner surface so that said code may be machine-read through said transparent layer.

1 4. The pill according to claim 2, wherein said pill has an outer surface
2 that is generally rough and porous and defines a total surface area, said pill including a
3 code-receiving region, said code receiving region including a layer of material made from
4 one of gelatin, keratin, collagen wax, sugar, protein, plastic, and sugar-based composition,
5 said code-receiving region having a surface area that is less than said total surface area of
6 said pill.

1 6. ^A~~The~~ pill according to claim 2, wherein said machine-readable code is
2 a 2-dimensional, high-density bar code matrix.

1 7. ^A~~The~~ pill according to claim 6, wherein said 2-dimensional, high-
2 density bar code matrix is PDF-417 type bar code.

1 8. ^{according to claim 1}~~A pill having a machine readable code thereon~~, the code having a
2 coded pattern that is too difficult for an unaided human eye after glancing the coded
3 pattern to discern differences within the coded pattern that may distinguish the coded
4 pattern from others of the same type.

1 9. A pill as in claim 8, wherein the coded pattern lacks alphanumeric
2 characters.

1 10. A pill as in claim 8, further comprising a label on which is printed the
2 machine readable code, said label being on a body of the pill.

1 11. A pill as in claim 8, wherein the pill is any one of a tablet and capsule.

1 12. A pill as in claim 8, wherein the code is of a dimension that is at most
2 one-tenth a size of a standard UPC bar code.

1 13. A process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill, comprising
2 the steps of:

- 3 a) providing a thin sheet of biocompatible material;
- 4 b) applying said code onto one surface of said thin sheet; and
- 5 c) adhering said thin sheet to said surface of said pill.

1 14. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill, according
2 to claim 13, wherein the step of applying includes printing said code onto said one
3 surface.

1 15. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill, according
2 to claim 13, wherein the step of applying includes embossing said code into said one
3 surface.

1 16. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill according
2 to claim 13, wherein the step of providing a thin sheet of biocompatible material includes
3 providing a thin layer of gelatin mounted on a release sheet and said further including a
4 step of removing said release sheet from said gelatin so that said gelatin remains adhered
5 to said one surface of said pill.

1 17. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill according
2 to claim 16, wherein said adhering step includes applying water to one of said one
3 surface and said gelatin layer.

1 18. A method of avoiding confusion between pills, comprising the steps of:
2 reading a machine readable code on a pill with a reader wherein the
3 machine readable code includes a coded pattern that is too difficult for an unaided
4 human eye after glancing the coded pattern to discern differences within the coded
5 pattern that may distinguish the coded pattern from others of the same type; and
6 identifying any one of a source, distributor, and contents of the pill based
7 on the step of reading.

1 19. A method as in claim 18, wherein the code is read from a label on the
2 pill.

1 20. A method as in claim 18, wherein the code is read from an imprint
2 directly on the pill.

1 21. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 determining the distributor of the pill for purposes of tracking gray goods.

1 22. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the contents while reading the code on pills having any one of a same shape
3 and a same color.

1 23. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the source of a plurality of pills within a common container for purposes of
3 determining whether all came from a common source.

1 24. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the source for purposes of distinguishing between a brand name supplier and
3 a generic supplier of the pills.

1 25. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the contents for purposes of conducting clinical trials.

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26. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes

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identifying the contents of successive pills and make an indication if taking the successive

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pills at the same time would cause the medication each contains to chemically react with

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any one of each other and the body environment in a medically undesirable manner.

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27. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes

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identifying the contents for purposes of sorting medication of different contents.

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28. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes

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identifying the contents for the purpose of making a medical evaluation of a person

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taking the pill.

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29. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of reading is carried out

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with a scanner that emits a laser beam to strike on an area of the machined readable

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code.

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30. A method as in claim 18, further comprising the step of recording a

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timing of the step of reading and storing in a data base information containing the

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timing and that which was read during the step of reading.

1 31. A method as in claim 30, further concerning the step of reading a
2 further coded pattern indicative of nutrition and diet and storing the further coded
3 pattern in the data base.

1 32. A method of efficacy record keeping, comprising the steps of:

- 2 (a)) scanning a coded pattern from which medication contents may be
3 correlated;
4 (b) clocking a time of day that the scanning is carried out;
5 (c) further scanning of other coded patterns from which nutritional items
6 may be correlated;
7 (d) clocking the step of further scanning;
8 (e) signaling commencement and ending of efficacy of the medication;
9 (f) clocking the step of signaling; and
10 (g) storing results of steps (a) to (f).

1 33. A method as in claim 32, further comprising the step of deriving the
2 medication contents and the food items from the stored results of step (g) based on
3 correlating with information in a data base; and retrieving the results from step (g)
4 timing information corresponding to that which was clocked.

1 34. A method as in claim 32, further comprising the steps of evaluating
2 steps (a) to (g) for a situation that is less than optimal for a duration of efficacy of the
3 medication and indicating a warning in response to finding the situation as a result of the
4 step of evaluating.

1 35. A method of conducting a clinical trial of pills, comprising the steps of:
2 providing a plurality of pills each having an alpha-numeric code readable
3 with an unaided eye and a machine readable code that too difficult for an unaided
4 human eye after glancing of the coded pattern to discern differences within the coded
5 pattern that may distinguish the coded pattern from others of the same type, said
6 patterns being different on a group of the pills and the alpha-numeric code being
7 identical on said group of the pills; and
8 scanning the machine readable code to determine whether the pills being
9 scanned at any given time is a placebo.

1 36. A method of conducting a clinical trial of pills, comprising the steps of:
2 providing a plurality of pills each within a package, at least one of the
3 package and the pill having an alpha-numeric code readable with an unaided eye and a
4 machine readable code whose patterns fail to be discernable from a glance with the
5 unaided eye to distinguish over those of a same type, said patterns that are associated
6 with a group of said pills being different from each other and the alpha-numeric codes
7 that are associated with said group of the pills being identical with each other; and

8 scanning the machine readable code to determine whether any of the pills
9 within the packages being scanned at any given time is a placebo.

1 37. A method of manufacturing a pill having medication contents,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 forming the pill by layers one atop the other, the layers including an inner
4 layer, an outer layer and an intermediate layer between the inner and outer layers, the
5 step of forming including forming the intermediate layer by printing with a substance
6 that is edible and digestible.

38. A method as in claim 37, wherein the step of printing with the
substance forms part of the medication contents.

39. A method as in claim 37, wherein the printing arranges the substance
in a manner that is machine readable code.

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